

Baird Praises House Passage of FY 2009 Budget Conference Agreement (June 6, 2008)

Washington, D.C. - In a time when Americans are struggling to balance their budgets, feed their families, and pay skyrocketing energy and healthcare bills, the House of Representatives today passed the FY 2009 Budget Conference Agreement that focuses on meeting the greatest needs of Americans while balancing the nation's budget and strengthening the economy.

As a member of the Budget Committee, Congressman Brian Baird (WA-03) worked with Chairman John Spratt (D-SC) earlier this year to secure major provisions in the FY09 House Budget that provided tax relief for millions of American families, increased funding for efficient and renewable energy programs, and included robust defense funding to keep America safe. Today, Congressman Baird applauded the House passage of the FY 2009 Budget Conference Agreement that included these provisions. The bill passed by a vote of 214 to 210.

"As a member of the House Budget Committee, I am proud of the FY 2009 Budget Agreement and the vital investments it makes in the sales tax deduction, math and science education, and the U.S. Forest Service, among other important priorities for residents of Southwest Washington," said Congressman Baird.

Rep. Baird was instrumental in securing major victories for Southwest Washington in the FY 2009 Budget Conference Agreement:

Extension of Sales Tax Deduction. Rep. Baird was successful in securing an extension of the sales tax deduction in the FY 2009 Conference Budget Agreement that will provide tax relief for millions of taxpayers, including residents in Southwest Washington.

Secure Rural Schools. Rep. Baird helped secure vital funding for the Secure Rural Schools Program. The deficit-neutral reserve fund will accommodate legislation to reauthorize the program. Passed in 2000 with Congressman Baird's support, the Secure Rural Schools program allows counties to receive federal financial assistance based on the average of the top three annual revenues they received from timber harvest on federal lands from 1985 to 1999. More than 4,400 rural schools and 700 counties nationwide have benefited from the law.

Law Enforcement Funding to Fight Meth. Rep. Baird helped secure funding for the Byrne JAG program and the Community Oriented Policing (COPS) program in the House Budget. The President's FY09 budget proposed to eliminate these two programs. The FY 2009 Conference Budget Agreement restores funding for these programs that help local law enforcement

officials fight methamphetamine in Southwest Washington and across America.

Math and Science Education Initiatives. As Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Research and Science Education, Rep. Baird fought to include funding for programs under the America COMPETES Act, bipartisan legislation that passed last year in order to ensure our competitiveness in the global economy.

Career and Technical Education loans. As co-founder of the Career and Technical Education Caucus, Rep. Baird was instrumental in securing funding for the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Program. Today's agreement rejects the President's cuts to education programs, including Career and Technical Education programs.

Forest Service Funding. Rep. Baird pushed for an increase in funding for the U.S. Forest Service that was included in the FY09 House Budget. The FY 2009 Conference Budget Agreement includes increased funding for programs within the Dept. of Interior and the Forest Service.

National Park Service. As co-founder of the Congressional National Parks Caucus, Rep. Baird helped secure vital funding for the National Park Service and worked to include a provision allowing for passage of legislation to implement the National Park Centennial Initiative. The FY 2009 Budget Conference Agreement includes a deficit-neutral reserve fund to accommodate the National Park Centennial, which would provide funds for the National Park System to improve parks and other projects approved by the Interior Dept. The agreement provides \$1 billion dollars more than the President requested for natural resources and the environment.

Mental Health Parity. As a former health care professional, Rep. Baird has been strongly supportive of efforts relating to mental health parity. Rep. Baird was a strong advocate of securing language in the House Budget to allow for the enactment of a mental health parity bill. Earlier this year, the House of Representatives passed the Paul Wellstone Mental Healthy and Addiction Equity Act of 2007, (H.R. 1424), of which Rep. Baird is an original cosponsor and leading advocate. Today's FY 09 Budget Conference Agreement maintains a deficit-neutral reserve fund for mental healthy parity legislation.

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